Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and thirty-seventh plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 1 February 2018, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha .....(Sri Lanka)

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The President: I call to order the 1437th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. Excellencies and dear colleagues, I found the discussions that took place last Tuesday encouraging, forthcoming and thought-provoking. I am grateful for the positive spirit with which you approached the informal discussions and for your ideas. I would like to suggest that, today, delegations continue their reflections on the reasons why all the work graphically reflected in the table developed by the presidency did not work and, in their interventions, also reflect on how these past proposals could be refined, merged or repackaged to adapt them to the current circumstances.

It is again my intention to conduct this discussion in an informal setting and to suspend the formal plenary meeting and reconvene in an informal meeting. Therefore, before we do that, I note that there is a list of speakers who would like to take the floor. We shall go through that list of speakers and then move on to the informal session. Is that acceptable?

I have on my list Ethiopia, Belarus, Chile, Germany, the Russian Federation and Japan.

May I now invite the Ambassador of Ethiopia to take the floor? Excellency, you have the floor.

Mr. Botora (Ethiopia): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that the Conference will benefit from your able leadership and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support in discharging your responsibilities.

I also wish to bid farewell to His Excellency Ambassador Alexey Borodavkin of the Russian Federation and wish him all the best in his future endeavours. I also join other delegations in welcoming the Ambassadors of Austria, Egypt, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Peru and Poland and I wish them a productive session and stay in Geneva.

Ethiopia recalls the great importance of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiation forum to promote global nuclear disarmament and secure the world against nuclear proliferation. We must therefore renew consistently our efforts to preserve its credibility by revitalizing its substantive work. That is why, at the beginning of this annual session, Ethiopia would like to underline the need for the early adoption of the programme of work so as to lead to the commencement of substantive negotiations on the elements of the agenda items of this Conference. In this regard, Ethiopia appreciates the efforts made by you, Mr. President, in compiling various proposals since 2000 to enable the members of the Conference to reach consensus on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

All of us assembled here recognize the serious danger facing our world today through the continued existence of nuclear weapons, their possible use and threat of use. We firmly hold the view that the delay in taking concrete measures to eliminate these weapons costs us all dearly in terms of maintaining international peace and security and preventing the escalation of all-out nuclear war.

The possibility of use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors is another factor complicating the issue, as has been correctly indicated in your opening remarks. Ethiopia therefore calls on all parties concerned to realize the sense of urgency of embarking upon a constructive negotiation leading to the global non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame. This includes prohibiting their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use. Ethiopia also calls on all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to work towards the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, as part of their commitment to article VI of the Treaty.

As per the recommendations of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which includes the necessity of negotiations in the Conference on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning production of fissile materials of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, Ethiopia believes that the relevance of initiating negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty would significantly contribute to nuclear non-proliferation. In the same vein, Ethiopia also believes that interest in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes is critical and therefore encourages

the Conference to commence immediate negotiations on the development of a legally binding instrument preventing an arms race in outer space. It is in this spirit that Ethiopia calls on all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful uses of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and to refrain from actions contrary to that objective and to the relevant existing treaties that are crucial for the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation.

Ethiopia attaches paramount importance to the promotion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States. We are also of the view that such assurances help strengthen the non-proliferation regime and sustain the nuclear-weapon-free zones. This has been clearly indicated in the outcome document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Ethiopia therefore encourages the Conference to work towards legally binding instruments for each of the four core agenda items, including on negative security assurances.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like once again to wish you a successful presidency and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the deliberations of this Conference.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Ethiopia for his statement and I now invite the Ambassador of Belarus to take the floor.

Mr. Ambrazevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation supports the efforts of the six Presidents aimed at ending the impasse that the Conference on Disarmament has reached in its discussions.

During last year's session, I was the co-facilitator of the Conference's working group on the way ahead during discussions of agenda items 5, 6 and 7. Despite the fact that we were unable to make progress, on the whole the discussions proved to be useful.

The discussions undoubtedly highlighted the very different approaches taken by member States to how these issues should be addressed, to the opportunities for discussing these issues within the framework of the Conference and to the potential role of the Conference itself. At the same time, it seems to us that we were able to identify a new trend. Many of the initiatives under consideration, such as those on radiological weapons, were sidelined by the Conference in practice. Meanwhile, many States eloquently expressed the need for the Conference to discuss new challenges and threats related to cybersecurity, the use of artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons systems for military purposes and the increasing opportunities for non-State actors to obtain and use various kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

In other words, we all need to ensure that the Conference's work is relevant. The initial discussions of this year's session have shown that this need is critical and urgent. However, I will not focus on the progress of the discussions. The responses have been summarized in my report to Mr. Lynn, Chair of the working group, as contained in document CD/2102.

At the same time, I continue to believe that the Conference should be more ambitious in discussing these issues, and other new threats and challenges to international security and strategic stability, without compromising talks on four key agenda items.

Our delegation is convinced that agenda items 5, 6 and 7 are relevant to the Conference's mandate, owing to the close relationship between scientific and technical achievements and the possibility of their hostile use, the possibility of their having a destructive effect comparable to the use of nuclear weapons, the new role of non-State actors, particularly terrorist groups, changes to military doctrines and a shift towards strengthening the role of conventional weapons.

Judging by States' comments, I would like to note that, in my opinion, the Conference should have an effective review mechanism for addressing emerging threats and challenges, identifying specific problems and legal gaps, and developing the means to respond in a timely manner.

This year, we may once again find ourselves in a vicious circle that prevents us from adopting the, largely technical, programme of work of the Conference. We should, perhaps, not attempt to resolve all the issues before us in one go. For example, if we are talking about the need to begin negotiations on negative security assurances, there is no reason why, at the initial stage, the Conference should not consider the object, purpose and scope of a future document, that is, the elements that form the core of any international legal agreement. This will be the actual starting point for negotiations, whatever we call the process on paper.

To conclude, I would like to draw attention to rule 28 of the Conference's rules of procedure. According to this rule, the Conference, on the basis of its agenda, establishes its programme of work, which includes a schedule of its activities for that session. The adoption of the agenda by consensus indicates our shared agreement on the issues before the Conference. I therefore call on all delegations to show a creative and flexible approach to developing the schedule of the Conference's activities for this year.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Belarus for his statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Chile.

Mr. Lagos (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation has asked to take the floor once again to reiterate our country's concern about the persistent threat posed by nuclear weapons to the security of all inhabitants of our planet and to the survival of humankind.

At our opening meeting last week, we joined the delegations that welcomed the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and we also welcomed the recent inter-Korean dialogue as positive developments in the contemporary context of international security. However, this good news should not prevent us from undertaking an objective assessment of the facts on the ground, given the urgent need to react to the alarming escalation in the nuclear threat.

As stated in the recent publication of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, the symbolic time on the Doomsday Clock has approached two minutes to midnight.

We have reached this dramatic timeline owing to the insistence of nuclear-weapon countries on assigning a role to such weapons and even increasing their role in their national defence and security doctrines, a policy that has promoted a race to modernize such arsenals and develop new nuclear weapon technologies.

It is also alarming that there are plans to lower the threshold in order to justify the use of such weapons in the context of a so-called limited nuclear war. We are convinced, based on the extensive scientific research that has been conducted in recent years, that any intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

At the same time, we note with concern the suspension of negotiations on bilateral weapon reduction between the two main nuclear Powers and the threat of the use of such weapons as an allegedly legitimate foreign policy tool.

All these factors are bringing us closer to midnight. As we cannot continue to accept this worrying trend, we must insist on wider international collaboration based on multilateralism and international law and guided by our overarching goals.

We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's decision to convene a high-level conference on nuclear disarmament in May this year.

The possession of nuclear weapons should not be deemed to enhance the prestige of any country. We share the view expressed by Pope Francis late last year that the existence of nuclear weapons creates a false sense of security and that such weapons generate a mentality of fear that affects the entire human race.

With regard to this body's work, Mr. President, we reaffirm our appreciation of your efforts to ensure that we move towards the adoption of a programme of work. The difficult state of the disarmament and non-proliferation process requires this Conference to finally

implement its mandate as a body entrusted with the negotiation of international legal instruments.

Like the Ambassador of Belarus, we have acted as co-facilitators of the discussions of the working group on the way ahead and we can confirm, from our perspective on the deliberations, that major differences persist on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Nonetheless, we have observed the emergence of a political will on the part of the majority to support discussions and negotiations in this body on various proposals relating to security in outer space.

We also heard, during the discussions last week and on Tuesday, various interesting proposals on creative approaches to the discussion on the revitalization of our Conference. We share, in this connection, the idea and the proposal put forward by the Ambassador of Brazil at the last meeting, namely that we should also consider the possibility of discussing and possibly negotiating non-binding legal instruments. Obviously, such instruments should not serve as an alternative to the production of binding legal instruments, but they can constitute valuable intermediate steps in the context of a gradual approach. This more flexible approach may at least enable us to embark on a new stage of discussions and, hopefully, negotiations, thereby preventing the process from once again reaching a dead end.

It is in everyone's interest that this Conference should maintain its credibility and its validity as the only multilateral disarmament body.

The President: I thank the representative of Chile and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. Biontino (Germany): Mr. President, let me at the outset congratulate you on the assumption of your very important office. My delegation will do whatever it can to support your efforts. I would also like to welcome our new colleagues to the Conference on Disarmament. You will find the disarmament community quite a friendly and open group, which makes it easier to work here.

Year after year, we have been facing the challenge of how to overcome the deadlock in the Conference. Given the difficult global security context, and after all the efforts that have been made in the past and documented in the compilation prepared by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs on behalf of your presidency, we are realistic enough to know that any suggestion to change the status quo will have to face, as in the past, an uphill battle. However, we felt encouraged when we heard in the first meeting of this year's session of the Conference quite a number of calls to be more creative and flexible when it comes to defining the threshold for a programme of work. The latter should not constitute the Holy Grail of our work and an end in itself, but rather a tool to start working on instruments to promote disarmament and arms control and to fend off any tendencies to enter into a new arms race.

At the opening meeting of this year's session of the Conference, we indicated that we could consider a new approach guided by realism and a sense of responsibility for the future of this body. We said that the channels for communication the Conference is offering are more and more important in a global context with conflicting security interests and that we should make the most out of the existing platform, building on the positive experiences of the past when we conducted substantive discussions on the core items of this forum. As a programme of work, commencing substantive negotiations might once again not be a realistic perspective for 2018. This could be facilitated through a more specific mandate for the Conference which includes these kinds of in-depth discussions on the core agenda items without having to resort to long procedural detours to make this happen. However, in addition we need to make progress on at least some of the core agenda items and develop new approaches. These could include discussions on new global security challenges, such as those connected with artificial intelligence, autonomy of technologies and cyberthreats.

Overall, the suggested approach could contain, in our view, the following four aspects. The first aspect concerns substance. We need to make the Conference a forum for substantial and continuous debate again, even in the absence of a specific programme of work with a clear-cut negotiating mandate. In this vein, we should endow the Conference

with a mandate to continuously broaden and deepen substantive discussions on the core agenda items, notably nuclear disarmament and arms control, including a fissile material cut-off treaty, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as new challenges or "frontier issues", as described by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu, recently. Debates could primarily follow the following objectives:

- Taking stock of what has already been agreed upon within the Conference on Disarmament
- Deepening and broadening the discussions from that point on, wherever possible
- Examining the specific value of each one of the topics to the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture as well as to regional and global security
- Getting a better understanding of the requirements for possible instruments in terms of reciprocity, universality and regional relevance, including their effectiveness to prevent attacks against these vital interests

However, yet another round of discussions would represent too low a level of ambition. We would need a clear perspective, as is the task of the Conference, towards negotiations. This leads us to the second aspect, which concerns fixing clear benchmarks. We need to elaborate a clearer idea of the framework under which these issues under discussion could become part of a formal and dedicated programme of work. To this end, we could stake out a road map as to how to meet these framework conditions including:

- Deepening and broadening respective technical field discussion
- Defining a negotiating mandate
- Defining the conditions of maturity when the context for taking up negotiations seems ripe

Such an understanding should be reached at the outset, in order not to, once again, defer negotiations into a distant and uncertain future and make them subject to other preconditions, like linking them to other core agenda items.

Besides defining what conditions need to be met in order to start negotiations, we might also wish to consider whether negotiating a treaty is the only way to go forward, or whether agreeing on other forms of agreement might be acceptable as well. This is the third aspect of the suggested approach: the right format.

We need to consider all types of instruments that are suited for meeting our common goal of a safer and more stable world with the lowest level of armaments possible. Besides treaties or conventions, this could also take the form of a code of conduct, political declarations or any other instrument which could add to increased and shared security for all. The effectiveness of each possible instrument must be the guiding principle when considering the different options.

The fourth aspect is agreeing on intermediate steps en route to fully fledged negotiations. Intermediate steps are often necessary, as reaching the final objective of full and comprehensive disarmament cannot be achieved in one go. In the field of nuclear disarmament and arms control, this could entail:

- First, the elaboration of requirements in order to ensure that intermediate steps remain what they are meant to be: an intermediate step towards a nuclear-free world, which by no means aspires to preserve an unsatisfactory status quo
- Secondly, the understanding of complementary obligations both for nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States under various scenarios, including asymmetric weapons of mass destruction, disruptive new technologies and activities of non-State actors, including terrorists

The good news is that we do not have to start from scratch. We could build on the progress made during the working group on the way ahead, notably the reflections on requirements for possible specific negotiation mandates. The process just outlined, if mandated by this body, should automatically become part of a programme of work for the

Conference, unless it decides otherwise. The work conducted and the progress achieved under this mandate would be summarized regularly in the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament prepared and submitted by the last presidency, according to the existing rules of procedure.

Germany would be willing and ready to assume responsibility in the process just outlined, in accordance with its previous commitment. We are ready to discuss these suggestions with our partners and we remain open to comments and critical feedback.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement and for the very thought-provoking aspects he has laid out, something which we could reflect on as we go through the rest of the day's proceedings and this discussion on a programme of work.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation would like to draw the attention of all those present to a milestone in creating a world free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which has passed almost unnoticed in the Geneva disarmament forums. I am referring to the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which was developed at the Conference on Disarmament.

Over the years since that time, the Convention has become one of the most successful multilateral mechanisms in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, providing effective support for international security. Impressive results have been achieved since 1997: 96 per cent of over 72,000 tons of chemicals subject to destruction under the Convention have been disposed of. In other words, we have come very close to saving humankind from this deadly weapon.

The past anniversary year of the Convention has been a landmark one for our country. Our last chemical munitions were destroyed on 27 September 2017. Russia had thereby completed its programme to dispose of stockpiles of chemical weapons. Through practical action, not words, we have once again confirmed our country's firm commitment to fulfilling our obligations under international agreements. Moreover, this was carried out ahead of schedule, almost three years before the expiry of the agreed deadlines. We would remind you that, in our case, it was a matter of destroying the largest chemical weapons arsenal in the world, with a total of almost 40,000 tons of deadly chemical warfare agents.

It goes without saying that such a large-scale operation required unprecedented efforts, primarily on the part of Russian experts. In addition, a whole range of States participated in implementing the Russian State programme on destroying the chemical arsenal: Belgium, Canada, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. We are grateful to all partners for their assistance. Now, with this titanic undertaking completed, we can say without exaggeration that the elimination by Russia of its chemical arsenal is our shared historic achievement.

However, we cannot relax yet. Much remains to be done. In this regard, we call upon the countries with chemical weapons to follow the example of Russia immediately, and upon the States still outside the international legal field of the Convention to join it without delay. We are convinced that, with a display of firm political will, we will be able to achieve our common goal of creating a world free of chemical weapons.

In recent years, the international community has faced a new and dangerous challenge related to the use of chemical weapons in the Middle East by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other groups. Terrorism, as we all well know, has no nationality and acknowledges no borders. WMD terrorism is a threat to all humanity and can be overcome only through cooperation.

Russia strongly condemns crimes using chemical weapons, irrespective of who commits them and where they occur. We consider it essential, in each specific case, to seek to establish the truth and bring the perpetrators to justice. However, such a verdict can be reached only on the basis of irrefutable evidence.

Moreover, for several years, Russia has been raising the issue of the need to take practical steps together to counter WMD terrorism. We, the participants in the Conference on Disarmament, can contribute to the common cause of combating this threat. It is time to move from words, doubts and hesitations to practical action and begin developing an international convention for the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism. The elements of this draft convention, prepared by the Russian delegation in cooperation with other interested participants in the Conference, remain on the Conference table as a basis for our joint efforts. We are ready to engage in such work.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that the development of a convention on combating WMD terrorism does not, in any way, imply a refusal to strengthen existing mechanisms. To this end, the Russian delegation actively and constructively interacts with its partners in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, in the implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and in the Security Council and the 1540 Committee.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his statement and I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Shindo (Japan): Thank you, Mr. President, for circulating the useful compilation of past proposals on the programme of work. We are encouraged by the active discussions on this issue in the previous plenary meeting. As Japan stated last week, we support a wide and balanced programme of work based on the inclusive method, since it could inspire all members to exercise flexibility with a compromising spirit.

With regard to the mandate of the programme of work, it is certainly most desirable for us to achieve a negotiating mandate. It is our mission and collective responsibility to start negotiations on disarmament issues. We have not fulfilled this mission for far too long. It is high time for us to do what we are expected to do. We understand that many efforts and attempts were made, regrettably unsuccessfully, in the past in order to agree on a negotiating mandate. That is also a reality, a reality that we need to think about. If we cannot agree on a negotiating mandate immediately, do we have a plan B? Do we have an alternative? Should we waste yet another year? We should think about what we can do, what steps we should take in order for us to come closer to starting negotiations. If we can begin substantive work to prepare for negotiations, we believe that it is a step forward towards our goal.

As far as Japan is concerned, a fissile material cut-off treaty must be emphasized among the four core agenda items; but we are ready to respond flexibly to the other agenda items, such as nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances. Moreover, revitalizing the Conference is urgent for us, too. In this sense, the idea of the working methods suggested by the Ambassador of India in the previous plenary meeting is encouraging and Japan is ready to discuss this issue in detail.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan. I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The destruction of chemical weapons of all types is the core objective of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Russia recently completed the destruction of all its chemical weapon stocks; this is significant progress in the history of the Convention and China highly appreciates it. Some progress has also been made since the beginning of this year in dealing with the chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in China, but, overall, the destruction process is still lagging behind.

(*spoke in English*)

It is still lagging behind. Therefore, it is the hope of China that Japan can make more investments and speed up the process of excavation and destruction so that the destruction of the weapons abandoned by Japan in China 70 years ago can be accomplished in accordance with the time frame adopted by the eighty-fourth session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. As far as China is concerned, we will continue to work with Japan and to make sure that this job is done in a timely manner.

The President: I thank the representative of China and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Ukraine.

Mr. Klymenko (Ukraine): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me extend my warmest congratulations to you on the assumption of your duties and wish you every success in this endeavour. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation for you to advance the objectives of the Conference on Disarmament.

Given the increasing risks of proliferation arising from the rapid advances in science and technology, as well as from growing terrorist threats and the need for States to pay constant attention to these developments to ensure the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), I would like to inform the member States of the Conference about the international workshop on promoting the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in the context of evolving proliferation risks and challenges, held in Ukraine, in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe last November in Kyiv. More than 45 participants from United Nations Member States and international organizations met in Kyiv on 2–3 November 2017 to discuss progress in and challenges to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery to non-State actors.

The main purpose of the workshop was to address implementation issues, including evolving proliferation risks and challenges, and to enhance practical, operational and enforcement cooperation among Member States and international and regional organizations. Accordingly, the workshop was focused, in particular, on the importance of coordinating efforts to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), taking into consideration Security Council resolution 2325 (2016), current risks in the context of developments in science, technology and international commerce, strengthening chemical, biological and nuclear security and other relevant issues. During the event, the main discussions, which were compiled together with representatives of United Nations Member States and international organizations, it was concluded that, while many States have taken important steps to strengthen prohibitions against and controls on weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, in fulfilment of their Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) obligations, gaps remain in key areas, especially in biological security. It was also acknowledged that developments in the nature of terrorism and rapid advances in science, technology and international commerce require continued attention when implementing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) at the national, regional and international levels.

More detailed information regarding the outcomes of the international workshop as well as the relevant recommendations made subsequent to the work carried out during this event can be found in the Chair's summary of the international workshop, which our delegation would kindly request to be circulated by the secretariat as an official document of this year's session of the Conference.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Ukraine for bringing to our attention the very important work which has been done and I am sure the secretariat will circulate that note. I have no other requests for the floor. I am sorry, Japan has made a request.

Mr. Shindo (Japan): I would like to respond to the statement by China regarding abandoned chemical weapons in China. Japan has been tackling this issue in a very faithful manner based on the destruction plan approved by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We believe that the abandoned chemical weapons destruction project has been achieving progress. This is a joint project between Japan and China and we are looking forward to working closely together with our partner.

The President: Now, as we indicated at the last session, the idea was to continue our informal discussion, to go into informal mode and continue the discussion on the programme of work, informed by the document which had been circulated earlier. So let

me suspend the meeting for now, briefly, as we move into the informal session. The meeting is suspended.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

The President: Distinguished colleagues, does any other delegation wish to take the floor? Belarus, you have the floor.

Mr. Nikolaichik (Belarus): Many thanks for giving our delegation the floor again. I will not take up too much time. I would just like to make the point that perhaps we, as a Conference, should take a closer look at the algorithm, the proposals put forward by Ambassador Biontino during today's plenary session.

As an initial reaction, I would like to note that many of the elements seem to us to be reasonable, consistent, logical and, basically, in keeping with the issues put before the Conference by the delegation of Belarus, including in the course of the work of the working group on the way ahead last year.

I therefore think that, if we give this proposal more detailed consideration, we may be able to make our way out of our vicious circle.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus and I give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Mr. President, perhaps this is a comment I should have made in the informal meeting, but you were so quick; you quickly suspended the meeting, and I had no time to gather my thoughts. I think that there have been so many constructive interventions in the course of our initial sessions this year, with a couple of converging elements to the effect that it is a common concern that the Conference should not continue any longer without any concrete or agreed activity which is worthwhile taking on and is consistent with its mandate and purpose. We heard today a very articulate proposal from Germany. We had heard in our last session a similar one from the Ambassador of India and then there were several ideas and proposals coming from different sectors. I do not think that any of them particularly contradicted another one, but what concerns me is that time flies and then all of a sudden this period of your presidency will be over and we should not allow these ideas to wither away. So I am concerned about the need for some sort of an informal or even formal process that you might propose to at least map out what has been said this year and try to put on an informal piece of paper the most relevant elements so that we can look at them and send them to our capitals to translate them. What I find is a more positive mood as we start the Conference this year compared with last year. I do not want to go any further than that, but perhaps we need some ideas as to how to translate what was said into something that can be looked at more concretely.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador. That was very much the idea we had as well and, with the secretariat, we are working on pulling together some thoughts in this regard. I had described it as a short list earlier on, but I think that, by the time we come back next Tuesday, we will be able to present to you some way ahead as to how to capture this and carry it forward. At that point, I think, we will be able to share with you a piece of paper which you can then send to your capitals so that we can stay on course in discussing this issue to try to come to some conclusions before the Sri Lankan presidency runs out. So your thoughts are very much consistent with our thinking at this point and we will engage in some discussions in preparing that.

If I see no other requests for the floor, this concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting will be on Tuesday, 6 February at 10 a.m. This meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.